

23 November 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: DCI

FROM:

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SUBJECT: Albania

1. Albania has lately been making the news:

-- Last December the long-time Prime Minister, Mehmet Shehu, died of gunshot wounds. Most observers dismiss the official explanation of "suicide due to nervous depression."

-- In September, following a five-hour fire-fight on the coast of Albania across from Corfu, the Tirana government issued a communique alleging that an unspecified number of "desperate men" had tried to land and had been killed by security forces.

-- Yesterday one Ramiz Alia was named Albania's head of state to replace Haxhi Lleshi, who held the post since 1953.

2. The country's long-time leader, Enver Hoxha, 74, is reported to be in failing health and all of the above events suggest mounting pressure of the sort likely to accompany a succession struggle.

3. According to press reports, Italian diplomats believe that the Albanian leadership may be at odds over the issue of drawing closer to the West in hopes of trade and technology. (Albania kicked out the Soviets in 1961, and broke with the Chinese in 1978.)

4. Western interest in Albania is based largely on a concern that the Soviet Union could regain its foothold in the wake of Hoxha's passing. The Soviets were building a rather large naval base on the Ionian Sea in 1961, and presumably would like such an installation now from which to pressure Yugoslavia, NATO's eastern flank, and the Mideast.

5. Instinct tells me that we ought to get up to speed on Albania. This country lies in baliwick, and I've asked him to check around the community to see what we know.

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